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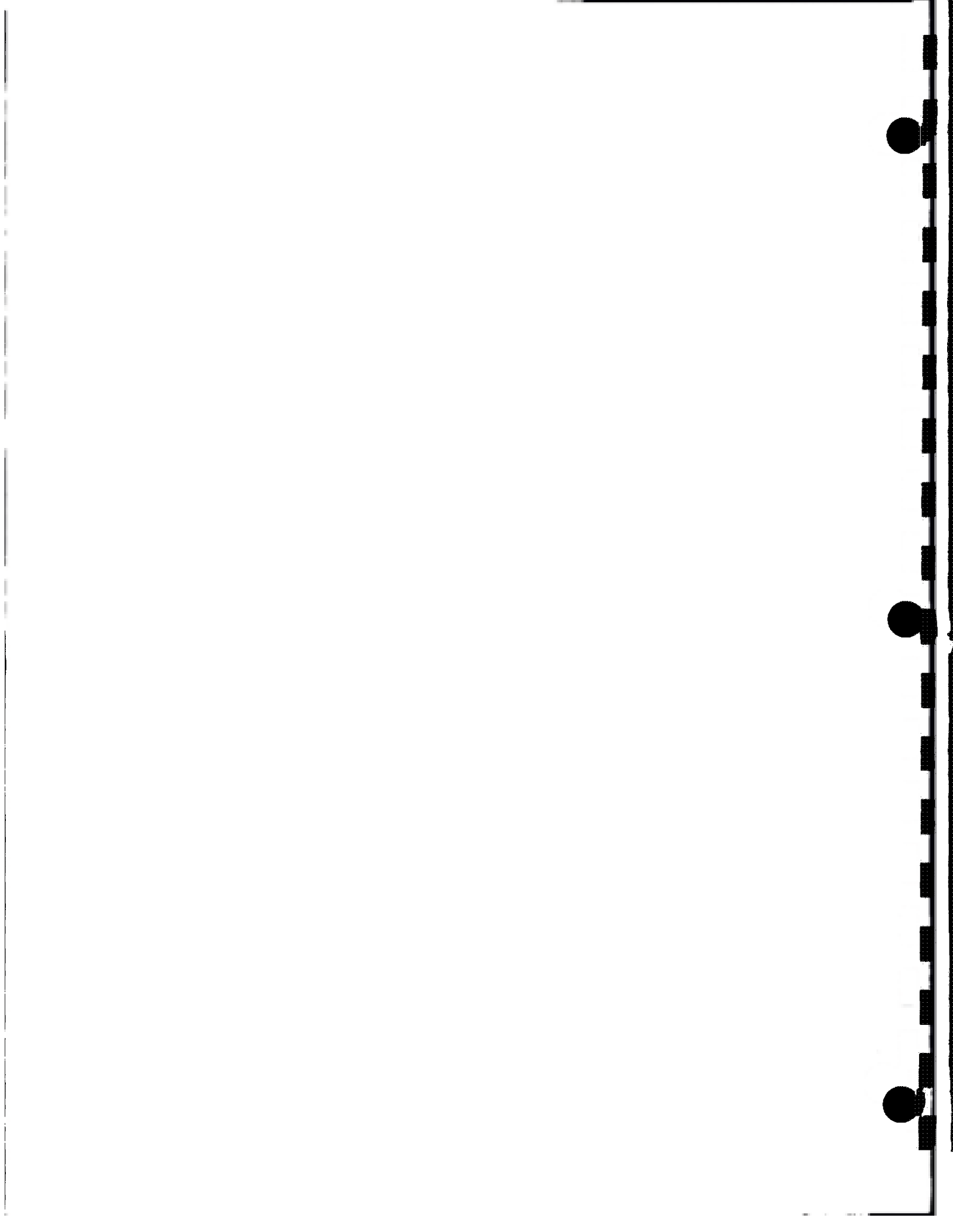
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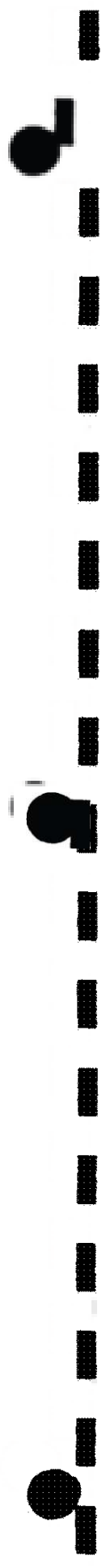
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HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY  
A CIVIL HISTORY  
of  
Golden Gate National Recreation Area  
and  
Point Reyes National Seashore  
California

Volume 2  
by  
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Historic Preservation Branch  
Pacific Northwest/Western Team  
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National Park Service  
United States Department of the Interior



## VOLUME II

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dump trucks, including those used by the Recreation and Parks Department, to unload debris down the cliffside. In recent years, however, the area was cleaned up and reopened to the public and today constitutes one of the shoreline properties within Golden Gate National Recreation Area, thus restoring and protecting its historic use as a recreation area.<sup>109</sup>

### 3. Aquatic Park

#### a. Picnics, Baths, and Swimmers

From the 1870s to the 1890s the Black Point Cove invited picnickers, swimmers, and bathers to its clean, white beach, its protected, clear waters, its moss-covered rocks, and its bulkhead on the east side, where some chose to dive into the deeper waters. North Beach listed three baths in the city directory for 1885 and 1886, Bamber and Berg's at the foot of Jones Street, Frahm Henry's at the foot of Hyde Street, and the Neptune and Mermaid Sea Baths on the beach between Hyde and Larkin Streets. Charlie Hanson reportedly provided 300 brightly painted frame bath houses at the Neptune and Mermaid baths, all of which usually were rented by city dwellers who had walked or driven out to the beach for a day's outing. Swimming in the cove was especially popular once the Ghiradelli chocolate factory at Beach between Polk and Larkin Streets began pumping streams of warm water out into the cove as part of its water-cooling system.

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109. "Stories of Early San Francisco," Pony Express Courier (Oct. 1942): 3; S.F. Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1913, p. 652; 1935, pp. 5, 54; 1937, pp. 16, 25, 31, 37; 1939, pp. 117, 129; 1940, p. 71; 1941, pp. 9, 29, 186, 229, 285; photos and caps., in S.F. Dist.-Land's End, S.F. History Room, S.F.P.L.; San Francisco, The Bay, p. 317; RP-075-65-2, Proposed location for Bridge of U.S.S. San Francisco at Lands End, Mar. 10, 1950, City Engr's. Office, S.F. Rec. and Parks Dept.; S.F. Rec. and Park Dept., Annual Report, 1953, p. 43; Hansen, San Francisco Almanac, p. 104.

Possibly because of the construction of large indoor swimming pools such as Sutro Baths during the 1890s, the Neptune and Mermaid enterprise folded, so that by 1895 the deserted, dilapidated bath houses lent an air of decay to the cove's surroundings. That year, however, the sports enthusiasts in the Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club found the cove an ideal location for their new boathouse, thus maintaining the tradition of recreation in the still somewhat remote city outskirts.<sup>110</sup>

b. Rowing and Swimming Clubs

Although the first to locate at Black Point Cove, the Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club was only one of several pioneer rowing clubs in San Francisco. By 1870 the Pioneer Rowing Club had organized and sponsored a Thanksgiving regatta. On May 5, 1873, the South End Boat Club (later called South End Rowing Club) was formed with Peter McAvoy, James Bolan, H. Comfort, and James Roe, its officers. In April 1877 the Ariel Rowing Club (now called San Francisco Rowing Club) organized, followed in August 1877 by the founding of the Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club. By the 1880s other clubs had also organized to enjoy rowing competition on the bay, among them the Tritons, and the Station B Post Office crew, but these and the Pioneer Club did not live out the century.<sup>111</sup>

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110. San Francisco Chronicle, July 30, 1916, p. 28, c. 3; May 1, 1950, clipping at Maritime Museum, Aquatic Park, San Francisco; Langley's San Francisco Directory 1885-1886, p. 1258; Joseph and Domingo Ghiradelli occupied the site by 1894. Handy Block Book, 1894, p. 118.

111. San Francisco Evening Bulletin, Nov. 10, 1870, p. 3; c.4; The Aquatic Monthly 2, No. 1 (June 1873), p. 54; this journal gave the names of the first officers, while Langley's San Francisco



Perhaps because of a stronger sense of tradition among its club members, more recollections and memorabilia have been preserved pertaining to the Dolphin Club than any other, and in a general way this club typifies the social and athletic activities pursued by the membership of all three clubs now located on the cove at Aquatic Park. A group of young men of German descent led by John Wieland a brewery owner, and Emil Kehrlein, an engraver, gathered in 1877 to form a sporting and social club similar to the Turnverein, the club they had all been members of in Germany. The first charter members in 1877 included two engravers and a jeweler for Hubash, Kutz and Company. Of the total thirty-two charter members, all were German by name, seven of whom were jewelers, three engravers, four brewers, and one, the state printer.

This group of rowers and swimmers located their first boathouse at North Beach, presumably at the corner of Montgomery and Beach Streets, the address given in the 1887 city directory. With the development of the waterfront, the members moved their boathouse to the foot of Leavenworth Street in 1890, and in 1895, selected a protected site at the foot of Van Ness Avenue to try to assure the membership a dependable location out of the path of construction for some years to come.<sup>112</sup>

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Directory, 1873, provided the occupations of two of them, Peter McAvoy, mattress maker with Goodwin and Company, and James Bolan, coachman at the Grand Hotel. Hansen, San Francisco Almanac, p. 47, gave the 1877 date for the Championship Regatta of the Pacific Association of Amateur Oarsmen (P.A.A.O.), p. 14, the Ariel Club organized in 1870 as the first boat club on the Pacific Coast. Program loaned by Philip Hunter, South End Rowing Club. San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 7, 1887, p. 6, c.4; Nov. 21, 1887, p. 5, c.2.

112. Photo of seven charter members, 1877: John Wieland, Edward J. Borremans, Louis Schroeder, Ernest H. Lutgens, Edward

The Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club had become well known in San Francisco by 1895 for its sporting events and its "very strong and influential members," among whom were A. P. Rothkopf, T. J. Sullivan, A. L. Schupert, A. V. Vandewater, F. C. Staib, J. C. Atridge, T. Kennedy, and C. M. Farrell. The club had grown to some fifty members by 1886, had incorporated in 1888, and in 1887 had added the forty-foot barge, John Wieland--reportedly "the largest and handsomest pleasure barge on the Pacific Coast"--to its fleet which, in 1895, contained more boats than owned by all the other rowing clubs combined on the bay. In 1892 the Dolphins apparently had initiated an annual New Year's hike to the Cliff House beach where the members took a dip in the ocean and closed their event with a banquet and election of officers at the Cliff House. (Later, this event was associated with the Olympic Club of San Francisco.) The Dolphins' enthusiasm for swimming, especially open water swimming, no doubt had won them by 1895 a local reputation among the numerous sporting clubs in San Francisco and the bay communities, a reputation which later was to be enhanced by their promotion of the first annual Golden Gate swim in 1917, followed some years later by the first annual swims around Alcatraz Island and in Raccoon Straits.<sup>113</sup>

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Peterson, Emil Kehrlein, Ernest H. Lutgins, framed at Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club; Langley's San Francisco Directory 1876 lists Wieland, Borremans, Schroeder and Kehrlein and three Petersons; photo clipping of the thirty-two charter members with the first boat house, "Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club," MS, ca. 1935, copy provided by William Walden, Dolphin Club; San Francisco Sunday Examiner and Chronicle, July 6, 1975, People Magazine, pp. 14-16; for the locations of the Dolphin Club, see Langley's San Francisco Directories, 1887-1896.

113. San Francisco Call, Nov. 7, 1895, p. 9, c1; "The Cronin Story is the Dolphin Story," typescript, MS, ca. 1954; "The Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club," MS, ca. 1935; "Opening Address by F. C. Staib Financial Secretary on Occasion of 50th Anniversary The Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club," MS, ca.

Although Black Point Cove had looked promising to the Dolphins as a location that would not be threatened by the rapid expansion of the city's streets and waterfront, in November 1895, when five carpenters were busy at work on the boathouse, Van Ness Avenue had just been bituminized down to Bay Street, only two blocks away from the beach, and influential persons were pressuring the Board of Supervisors to cut down and to grade the bluff so that the avenue might be extended to the waters edge, making it one of the city's most scenic drives. The Dolphins, no doubt in recognition of possible problems, had their clubhouse built so that it could be moved.<sup>114</sup>

At their new clubhouse, completed at a cost of \$1,800, the Dolphins staged annual Ladies' Days which drew reporters and spectators to the colorful swimming, boating, and social event. The club's German and Irish teams (later varied by French and Italian members), competed then against each other in barge and shell races, both in the cove and on the bay. Like other rowing clubs in the city, their numbers were growing and their reputation for fun social outings, such as picnics, barbecues, dances, and banquets, stood beside their proud record of aquatic sport competition. Possibly their handsome frame boathouse nestled in the cove's elbow, as well as their local influence in San Francisco, helped Daniel Burnham to propose in 1905 "a bay shore park" along the waterfront to the east and west of Black Point, in his plan for the improvement and adornment of San Francisco. But

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1927, loaned by William Walden, Dolphin Club. The latter document gave 1905 as the date for the first Cliff House hike and dip. Built in 1887 by an Alameda boat builder, the John Wieland continues to be a valued member of the Dolphin Club fleet. Interview and club tour with Bill Walden, Nov. 9, 1976.

114. San Francisco Call, Nov. 7, 1895, p. 9, cl.

Burnham's plan for Black Point Cove went unheeded, while the city's commercial interests pushed for more and more fill to build up the waterfront. In 1909 both the Ariel and South End Rowing Clubs' boathouses were relocated from the foot of Seventeenth Street, south of the Ferry Building, to the foot of Van Ness Avenue, next to the Dolphin boathouse. All three clubhouses, however, still stood in the line of future developments which not only threatened to put an end to all aquatic sports in Black Point Cove, but which also provoked the rowing clubs to agitate for a city park to secure a permanent spot for safe aquatic recreation on San Francisco's extensive commercial waterfront.

c. Park Movement

As already mentioned, Daniel Burnham envisioned in 1905 a bay shore park stretching from Laguna and Lewis streets east, beyond and including Black Point Cove, "the proposed yacht harbor." Burnham intended thereby "to preserve the beauty of the point [Black Point] and to restrain the encroachment of any buildings other than clubhouses and those of a semi-public character." Burnham's appreciation for the aquatic opportunities and scenic setting of Black Point Cove were lost, however, on the city's officials during the reconstruction of San Francisco after the April 1906 earthquake and fire. The beautiful

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115. Burnham, Report on San Francisco, p. 146; "Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club," MS., ca. 1935; San Francisco Morning Call, July 16, 1900, clipping provided by Bill Walden, Dolphin Club; Sept. 13, 1907, p. 9, c4; Crocker-Langley San Francisco Directory For the Year Ending September 1909 (San Francisco: H. S. Crocker [1909?], pp. 517, 1468; 1910, p. 200; 1912, p. 203; hereinafter cited Crocker-Langley Directory; photo of Dolphin Clubhouse at foot of Van Ness, ca. 1925; a framed invitation to the "Annual Ladies Day and Regatta," Oct. 13, 1901, called Black Point Cove, "Campo Bello Cove." Memorabilia on clubhouse walls; Malcolm W. Steel to Karl Kortum, no date, Aquatic Park photographs, S.F. Maritime Mus.

white sand beach of the cove became the dumping grounds for tons of debris from the Palace Hotel and other destroyed downtown buildings. According to one account, some 15,000 truck loads of red brick rubble from the hotel "utterly ruined" the fine bathing beach, possibly setting the precedent for the bay fill carried out in 1907-08 along the shore just east of the Dolphin Swimming and Boating Club.

Perhaps led by Dolphin Club members who had already passed thirteen years at the foot of Van Ness Ave, an Aquatic Improvement Association organized to promote the establishment of an aquatic park at the site. The association submitted a cost estimate for the park in April 1909, along with a request to the Board of Supervisors that the proposition be incorporated into a bond issue. With no objections from the Public Utilities Committee, which had designated a site on the northwestern shore of the cove for a salt water pumping station, the bond issue came to vote in November 1909, but San Francisco's public rejected the proposal to allocate \$796,000 to acquire lands at the north end of Van Ness Avenue for a public aquatic park.<sup>116</sup>

Although a dead issue so far as funding was concerned, the aquatic park proposal lived on during the years after the 1909 bond election and surfaced again in 1912 as a new

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116. Burnham, Report on San Francisco, p. 146; Dow, "Bay Fill," p. 66; "Map Showing Structures in Eastern Addition Blocks 32 to 38 Inclusive. Prepared by Marsden Manson, City Eng. . . . July 1908," Aquatic Park file, Bureau of Engineering, City and County of San Francisco; S.F., Bd. of Supervisors, Journal, 1909, pp. 355, 733; S.F., Municipal Reports, 1908-08, pp. 387, 399; according to Harry Field, Dolphin club member, Charlie Farrell originated the proposal for a San Francisco aquatic park. "The Cronin Story," a copy provided by Bill Walden of Dolphin Club.



city-wide bond issue. The Board of Supervisors, accepting the concept that the establishment, construction, and completion of the park stood in the public interest, recommended an \$800,000 bond to purchase land for an aquatic park at the foot of Van Ness Avenue. Even though the majority of San Francisco's electorate voted in favor of the proposition, the two-thirds majority required to secure the issue was not received and the aquatic park movement again stalled, but only momentarily, for within the year the San Francisco Recreation League and the South End Rowing Club (now located at the foot of Van Ness Avenue) petitioned the Board of Supervisors for an exchange of lands to achieve the aquatic park establishment.

The proposal to exchange lands at the foot of Van Ness Avenue owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad Company for city lands desired by the company on the city's southern waterfront may have originated with J. E. ("Ed") Sculley, president in 1913 of the South End Rowing Club, who has been honored as the "Father of Aquatic Park" by the club. The exchange idea, as well as the 1912 bond issue, may have resulted directly from the Southern Pacific's announced plans to construct several piers in the Black Point Cove for its subsidiary. Pacific Mail Steamship Company. As imposing a threat to the future of aquatic sports in the cove, however, was the approved plan of the State Board of Harbor Commissioners to extend the waterfront belt railway to the future site of the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition and to the U.S. Army's transport docks by tunneling through Black Point just west of the three rowing clubs. The proposed exchange of lands, in fact, got temporarily laid aside for a time in 1913 and 1914 while construction of the belt railway, as well as a military road from the foot of Van Ness Avenue out to the ferry wharf at the end of the point, required all the attention of the San Francisco Recreation League which spearheaded the fight to protect the cove as the site for the proposed aquatic park.

The problems began in the spring and summer of 1913 as the construction crews for the military road dumped "considerable material" along the line of ordinary high tide on the west shore of the cove, causing the Recreation League to petition the Board of supervisors to obtain an order stopping the Army's dumping from the United States Attorney General. By March 1914 the Pacific Athletic Association, the Corinthian Yacht Club, the South End Rowing Club, the P.A.C. Boat Club, the Pacific Association of Amateur Oarsmen, the Ariel Rowing Club, the North Beach Improvement Club, and the Retailers Protective Association, as well as numerous citizens and other organizations, had joined the San Francisco Recreation League in protest to the continued filling in of the bay for the State Belt Railroad. While the Board of Supervisors were giving consideration to a resolution to preserve the site by initiating legal proceedings against the contractors through the District Attorneys for San Francisco and the Northern District of California, the State Board of Harbor Commissioners' crews dumped more wagon loads of material, excavated from the tunnel and other diggings, into the bay on lots thirty-three and thirty-seven, along the railroad trestle which had been constructed from Jefferson and Hyde Streets, across the cove, to the east end of the tunnel. Despite the public outcry and the telegram sent to Congressman Julius Kahn from the eleven principle citizens' groups in protest, the City and State seemed disinterested in preserving the beach and cove. In fact, by April 1914 the Board of Supervisors had received an application from the State Harbor Commissioners to fill in cove blocks thirty-three, thirty-six, and thirty-seven, which, if approved, would have cut off the three rowing club boathouses from the water, spoiled the beach, and precluded use of the cove as an aquatic park.<sup>117</sup>

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117. S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1913, pp. 653, 684; 1914, p. 286; 1916, p. 474; a photo of J. E. Sculley entitled "Father of

Influential military and municipal officials had, by 1914, been apprised of the situation and persuaded to support the aquatic park movement. In April 1914, Lt. Col. Thomas Rees, civil engineer for the Army in San Francisco, informed his superior that the proposed plan to preserve the beach and cove for recreational purposes, which required the relocation of the belt line railroad track back to Beach Street and the recovery of the harbor lines back to the shoreline at Hyde or Larkin Streets, met with his approval. In July 1914 San Francisco's Supervisor Power moved that the Lands and Tunnel Committee of the Board of Supervisors reopen the question of an exchange of lands to create an Aquatic park at North Beach. Just as Van Ness Avenue was being extended down to Beach Street, the San Francisco Recreation League was making headway in its efforts to promote the land exchange. In April 1915, on the basis of the league's petition and the willingness of the Southern Pacific company to negotiate a land swap, the Board unanimously approved the resolution to request a legal opinion on the exchange from the city's attorney. Five months later, on September 23, 1915, the City Attorney submitted an elaborate opinion in favor of the exchange so long as the

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Aquatic Park," hangs on the wall at the South End Rowing Club; a clipping entitled, "Malcolm's Memories," in the Aquatic Park File, San Francisco Maritime Museum, provides the recollection of Malcolm Steel, who joined the South End Rowing Club in 1913 when Sculley was president. Steel recalls Sculley telling him he had the idea to promote an aquatic park in the area; notes on Survey of Cove by Punnett, Perez, and Hutchison, Engrs., San Francisco, May 1925, in Aquatic Park File, Bur. of Engr., S.F.; [California State Board of Harbor Commissioners] Biennial Report . . . For the Fiscal Years Commencing July 1, 1912, and Ending June 30, 1914, p. 19, hereinafter cited, Harbor Commrs., Biennial Report; Telegram, S.F. Citizens to Hon. Julius Kahn, Mar. 20, 1914; E. H. Crowder, Judge Advocate General, War Dept., to Chief, Quartermaster Corps., Mar. 30, 1914; Lt. Col. Thomas H. Rees, C.E. S.F., to Chf. of Engrs., Apr. 2, 1914, NA, RG 77, OCE, Gen. Corres., 1894-1923.



Southern Pacific Company used the "Market Place lots" which it would receive exclusively for transportation purposes and terminals.

In January 1916, after a comprehensive and detailed assessment of the lands had been completed by the city, the San Francisco Recreation League renewed its efforts to gain public support for the project. Concerned that real estate values might negatively determine the Board of Supervisors' decision on the exchange, and convinced that Black Point Cove was the best available site for an aquatic park, the aquatic section of the League met and organized a committee with Walter McArthur, chairman, and J. E. Sculley, John S. Phillips, James J. Cronin, and L. Grundy, members, to lead "an aggressive campaign" to win the support of other civic groups. By May 1916, several meetings before the Lands and Tunnels Committee had been held to give voice to the proponents and opponents of the proposition. Edward Sculley submitted diagrams for the proposed aquatic park, while formal endorsements were received by the committee from the Recreation League, Juvenile Protective Association, the Aerial, Dolphin, and South End rowing clubs, the Corinthian Yacht Club, the North Beach Promotion Association, the Uittria Colonna Club, and other sports clubs and individuals. With all the history and arguments submitted to the Board of Supervisors for their May 15, 1916, meeting, Sculley representing the proponents of the proposal, eloquently summarized the objections to using the yacht harbor at the site of the 1915 exposition as an aquatic park, and again stressed the fact that Black Point Cove provided the only sheltered location on that section of bay shore for a safe and enjoyable pursuit of aquatic sports. Possibly to counteract the protests of the Van Ness Avenue Improvement Club, which argued that the park would limit the area commercially, Sculley also pointed out that an aquatic park as a "public water place" would encourage San

Franciscans to patronize city facilities rather than leave in large numbers each Sunday for the Alameda baths.<sup>118</sup>

Sculley's oratory, backed by the many endorsements and plans for the aquatic park, led to the Board of Supervisors' May 22, 1916, Resolution, No. 12596, approving the land exchange and directing the Committee of Lands and Tunnels to negotiate with the Southern Pacific Company through appointed arbitrators. Even with this crucial vote in favor of the park, however, plans and negotiations dragged into 1917. During the intervening months, the campaign for an aquatic park continued, so that by January 4, 1917, when the Board of Supervisors met to consider the proposed exchange again, several more individuals and organizations had added their endorsements to the growing list of park backers, among them Major General J. Franklin Bell, Commanding General, Department of the Pacific; Civic League of Improvement Clubs; Congress of Mothers; Indoor Yacht Club; and the San Francisco Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis. The movement thus had expanded far beyond the sports clubs' perimeters, and now reflected a broader interest group which no doubt helped to bring the negotiations to a close in May 1917, when Southern Pacific Railroad Company paid the city \$392,000 to compensate for the greater value of the Market place lots it received in exchange for the Southern Pacific property at the foot of Van Ness Avenue.

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118. Sculley was a South End club member and James J. Cronin a Dolphin club member. San Francisco Examiner, Jan. 8, 1916, clipping, Aquatic Park file, S.F. Maritime Museum; S.F. Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1914, p. 756; 1915, p. 448; 1916, pp. 157, 473-74; [San Francisco Board of Public Works], Annual Report . . . For the Fiscal Year 1914-1915, p. 2; hereinafter cited S.F., Bd. of Public Works, Annual Report; Rees to Chf. of Engrs., Apr. 2, 1914, NA, RG 77, OCE, Gen. Corres., 1894-1923.

Although the movement to establish an aquatic park had thereby been accomplished, the struggle to provide for its completion had only begun. Within the year the Board of Supervisors opened discussions on the disbursement of the \$392,000 received from the land exchange, and all the proposals, except Supervisor McLeran's, gave aquatic park development a small slice of the pie. The movement had gained popular support, however, and despite the endless delays and problems, the plans and improvements for aquatic park progressed in the decade to follow, making it possible, finally, late in 1928, to begin the actual construction of the park's facilities.<sup>119</sup>

d. Plans and Improvements, 1917-1927

The Southern Pacific Company lands at the foot of Van Ness Avenue in Block 38, Western Addition, only comprised a portion of the waterfront acreage planned for the aquatic park, and as early as December 1917, the Board of Supervisors voted to condemn part of Block 37, which contained the shoreline where the three rowing clubs and the pier for the Spring Valley Water Company stood. The following month Supervisor Hayden presented a resolution that a citizens committee on Aquatic Park be appointed by the Mayor to prepare a plan for the park's development, to be submitted to the Board of Supervisors. With the passage of Hayden's resolution on February 4, 1918, and the condemnation of additional submerged lots in Blocks 406, 427, 428, and 430 in Black Point Cove on May 20, 1918, the advancement of the park's development looked very promising. One year passed, however, before Aquatic Park again received mention in the Board of Supervisors' meetings, when they voted to order the improvement of

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119. S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1917, pp. 17-18, 116, 224, 243, 485-87, 1226, 1385-87.

the beach according to plans drawn up by the city's Board of Public Works. Having specified contract labor for the cleanup, the Supervisors on June 16, 1919, authorized \$5,000 to let a contract with Owen McHugh to do the work, and in November 1918 they authorized the Board of Public Works to contract for development plans and specifications which would be subject to the approval of the Mayor's Citizens' Committee on Aquatic Park.

All these favorable actions, however, paled somewhat in September 1919 when the President of the City Planning Commission recommended the purchase of Sutro property including Sutro Baths, with Aquatic Park funds, arguing before the Supervisors that this acquisition was "of vastly greater importance than the Aquatic Park project." Still the appointed representative for the San Francisco Recreation League and for the proponents of Aquatic Park, J. Edward Sculley objected to the diversion of the park's funds, and his protest apparently helped to scuttle the proposed land purchase.<sup>120</sup>

During 1920 the Board of Public Works announced a competition among architectural draftsmen to draw up plans for Aquatic Park in accordance with the complete surveys and basic plans prepared for the Bureau of Engineering by civil engineer, John Punnett, of San Francisco. The Board also appointed a committee of five to judge the competition, consisting of the City Architect, John Reid Jr.; the City Engineer, M. M. O'Shaughnessy; and Fredrick H. Meyer, Arthur Brown Jr., and J. E. Sculley, from the professional and recreational ranks of the city population. Punnett's basic plan for Aquatic Park, dated

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120. S.F. Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1917, p. 1439; 1918, pp. 87, 118, 366, 417; 1919, pp. 292, 302, 480, 771, 1039.

January 1920, showed the general lines of later development, while the architectural schemes which won first prize in the contest had little resemblance to the later plans selected for the park.

Certain problems in the cove had also been addressed by the Board of Public Works during 1920. Plans for the relocation of the belt line railway and the removal of the trestle over the cove waters had been completed, as had the design for a complete sanitary system for the park to stop sewage from flowing into the cove. Moreover, a study was being made to determine how best to sterilize and filter the water for a proposed swimming pool for the park.<sup>121</sup>

More than three years had passed since the authorization of aquatic Park, and little physical improvement had been made at the location. In August 1920 the North Beach Promotion Association endorsed the plans for Aquatic Park and urged action be taken as soon as possible to implement them. Once the Board of Supervisors approved a resolution in October to get the actual work on Aquatic Park started immediately, one contract was let with San Francisco Motor Drayage Company to grade the park lands between Van Ness Avenue and Larkin Streets, north of Beach Street, at a cost of \$25,500, and another with Healy-Tibbitts Construction Company for some \$18,400 for relocating the belt line railway inshore along the curve of Aquatic Park, and behind the proposed bath house on the beach at the foot of Polk Street. This

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121. S.F., Bur. of Engr., Annual Report, 1920, pp. 33-36; "Plan of Proposed Aquatic Park San Francisco, Cal. Prepared For Aquatic Park Committee by John M. Punnett, C.E.," January 1920, RP-005-20-1, San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, Engineering Division, hereinafter cited, S.F. Rec. and Parks Dept., Engr. Div.



work completed, the Board of Public Works transferred the jurisdiction for Aquatic Park to the Park Commissioners in January 1922, along with the balance of available funds for the park's development, which, when finally transferred the following November, amounted to \$59,000. That the balance in November reflected a decrease of more than \$20,000 from the preceding January may have been the reason why Supervisor Hynes moved to repeal the resolution which transferred the Aquatic Park funds to the Park Commissioners. Evidently a delicate subject, Mayor Rolph himself appeared before the Board of Supervisors on November 27, 1922, to defend the "unjustifiable criticism" of the Park Commission, and especially of its President, Herbert Fleishaker, and to assure them that they could feel confident that Aquatic Park would be safe under the Commissioners' management.<sup>122</sup>

Despite the mistrust over their competence, the Park Commissioners proceeded with their plans for Aquatic Park. Only two weeks after the Mayor's speech in their behalf the Commissioners approved an agreement with Bakewell and Brown, Architects, of San Francisco, to prepare a comprehensive sketch of the proposed Aquatic Park, along with estimates of the cost of completing the improvements, without charge, unless the Park Commission decided to use the plans. More prestigious local architects could hardly have been selected for the job of designing Aquatic Park, for John Bakewell, Jr., and Arthur J. Brown, Jr., both had gained prominence in San Francisco for their numerous designs for commercial and civic structures in the city reborn after the 1906 earthquake. Among their greatest architectural

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122. S.F. Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1920, pp. 679, 849; 1921, pp. 178, 189, 550; 1922, pp. 58, 79-80, 104, 968, 985; S.F., Bur. of Engr., Annual Report, 1921-22, p. 23.

achievements were the new City Hall building (1917) and the Horticultural Building at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Brown not only had served as associate architect for the Exposition from 1912 to 1915, but he had also served as professor of architecture at the University of California, as lecturer at Harvard University, and as judge for the 1920 architectural competition to design Aquatic Park's development. Such a distinguished record stood behind their plans for Aquatic Park submitted to the Park Commissioners early in 1923 and approved by them and the Board of Supervisors at the close of the year.<sup>123</sup>

With every good intention of progressing rapidly with the actual construction called for in the accepted plans, the Park Commissioners, through Bakewell and Brown, hired Frank G. White, engineer of the San Francisco Subway, to prepare detailed plans and specifications for the relocation of the army quartermaster's pier on Black Point and for the construction of a recreation pier and breakwater proposed for the west side of the cove. In preparation for this construction the city had initiated condemnation proceedings on four parcels of land along the cove from the army pier to the railroad trestle. It was these legal transactions, as well as the securing of a building permit from the United States Army, however, which delayed construction for about five years.

In the meantime, the Board of Supervisors and the Park Commissioners gave considerable attention to the

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123. S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1922-23, p. 27, 1925, p. 166; 1927, p. 1437; The Architect and Engineer (July 1930), p. 27; Men of California (San Francisco: Western Press Reporter, Inc., 1925), pp. 43, 163; Roger Olmsted and T. H. Watkins, Here Today San Francisco's Architectural Heritage (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1968), p. 329.

acquisition of additional lands to enlarge the original eight-acre Aquatic Park along the lines of the Bakewell and Brown scheme for the recreation area. In addition to condemning and buying cove lots between 1923 and 1925, the city arranged with the State of California to transfer its tidelands property between Polk and Larkin, and Tonquin and Jefferson Streets for the aquatic park project. With these land acquisitions, the approved plans for a great basin nearly 1,500 feet in diameter protected by a massive, semi-circular concrete bulkhead, 1,600 feet long and sixty feet wide, extending north from the Fort Mason shoreline approximately 1,400 feet from Van Ness Avenue, could be carried to completion, thereby creating in accordance with the Park Commissioners' expectations, "one of the world's most perfect municipal beach resorts."<sup>124</sup>

Within the harbor created by this great bulkhead or recreation pier, both rowing and sailing boats could find safe waters and anchorage, while the beach would receive protection from the destructive "northers" which blew off the bay. The plans envisioned the construction of permanent buildings for the rowing clubs on the west side of the cove and for the smaller

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124. The frequent considerations and decisions made on Aquatic Park land acquisition between 1923 and 1925 can be found in S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1923, pp. 109, 127, 138, 155, 196, 245, 265, 1237; 1924, pp. 61, 1124, 1520; 1925, pp. 112, 133, 166, 1064, 1611, 1796; and S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1924, p. 61, which provides a copy of the act passed by the California legislature and accepted by Mayor Rolph on December 10, 1924, granting the submerged lands to the city for the aquatic park. Descriptions of the park plans were found in S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., Annual Report, 1924, pp. 34-35, and in Clay M. Greene, Park Development in San Francisco, Past, Present and Future (San Francisco: James H. Barry Co., n.d., [ca. 1924], p. 11. Hansen, San Francisco Almanac, p. 232; Aquatic Park file, S.F. Bur. of Engr.



yacht clubs of the city on the east side of the basin, with bathhouses, childrens' wading pools, restrooms, gardens, an esplanade, bandstand, and various amusements along the beach or south side of the park. According to John M. Punnett's engineering map with cost estimates, the city was to spend \$1,000,000 to see the Aquatic Park plans to completion.

By the close of 1925 all the lands necessary for the park had been acquired, but development still hinged on the necessary permit from the War Department. In anticipation of the forthcoming construction, the Board of Supervisors hired Bakewell, Brown, and Baver to prepare preliminary architectural plans for the park, and the State Board of Harbor Commissioners received from the State Engineer detailed plans and cost estimates for the removal of the Golden Gate Ferry which operated off the Hyde Street pier. While the proposal for relocating the military pier to make room for the recreation pier was still under negotiation, (because the Judge Advocate General's Department had denied the city a permit in 1923 due to a conflict over boundary lines), the Board of Supervisors gave recognition to the "injustice" done to the public by delaying the Aquatic Park plans for over ten years. In April 1926 the Board adopted a resolution which called for the completion of Aquatic Park at the earliest possible date and the requisition by the Finance Committee of whatever funds necessary to accomplish the work. As if a fresh wind had thus stirred, the Park commissioners received completed engineering plans in June 1926 and the Board of Supervisors ordered the removal of the rowing clubs and the appropriation of \$5,000 for the improvement of the park, most likely to help defray the cost of moving the rowing club boathouses to the foot of Polk Street to make way for work on the seawall. By the close of 1926 the city had expended \$378,799.96 for improvements, grading, sewer, railroad relocation, plans, surveys, labor, and land acquisition for Aquatic Park, but only \$10,000 had been

appropriated in the 1926 to 1927 fiscal year for the park's future development.

Although short on funds, preliminary improvements were completed in the summer of 1927 when Pearson and Johnson, contractors, moved the rowing club boathouses and the Renner Foundation Company relocated their approaches and aprons, for a total cost of more than \$10,000. But in August the Board of Supervisors learned that it not only had taken funds from the Aquatic Park account and had not replaced it, but that the projected cost of the proposed park construction was \$1,500,000, to be spread over a five-year period. Unable to come up with that kind of money, the Board backed a city-wide bond issue in November 1928 to raise \$950,000 for the Aquatic Park and Marina Park projects, in order to assure San Francisco "a system of parks unequalled in the world."<sup>125</sup>

Bond Issue 59 for Aquatic Park and Marina Park funding stood an especially good chance that year because Congress finally had approved on March 28, 1928, the construction of the Aquatic Park recreation pier which required the relocation of

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125. Greene, Park Development, p. 11; S.F., Bd. of Park Comms., Annual Report 1924, p. 34; San Francisco Bulletin, Jan. 1925, Aquatic Park text, S.F. Maritime Mus.; [Aquatic Park] "Surveyed For Board of Park Commissioners, San Francisco, Cal. By Punnett, Parez and Hutchison, Engineers, San Francisco, May 1925"; Memo, B. P. Lamb, Sec., S.F. Park Comms., to Mr. Fleishaker, May 4, 1927, Aquatic Park File, S.F. Bur. of Engr.; S.F. Bd. of Park Comms., "Minutes," 1925, pp. 77, 129, 130, 146, 162, 166; 1926, p. 203; 1927, pp. 29, 31-32, 36, 38, 46; S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1924, pp. 720, 1063; 1925, pp. 990, 1064; 1926, pp. 609, 1228, 1257, 1435, 1791-92, 1927, pp. 1382, 1437-38; The Municipal Employee 1, No. 3 (Sept. 1927), 27; 2, No. 2 (Nov. 1928), 5; Flyer for Bond Issue 59, Oct. 1, 1928, in Aquatic park Folder, Soc. of Cal. Pioneers, S.F.

the military pier. After President Coolidge's signature confirmed the act, San Francisco announced a \$100,000 appropriation for Aquatic Park in fiscal year 1928-29, with hopes that the bond issue would be passed. While the bond issue failed by only a few votes, the Board of Supervisors had committed themselves to the construction of the well-publicized recreation pier, and plans went forward to see its completion.<sup>126</sup>

e. Municipal Pier, 1928-33

One year after the 1928 bond issue failed, the Board of Supervisors put before the electorate a proposal to appropriate \$250,000 in each annual budget, beginning in 1930-31, to complete Aquatic Park. Presumably having received public approval of such expenditures, the Park Commissioners opened negotiations with the War Department for the relocation of the army wharf early in 1930, and in June awarded a contract with M. B. McGowan, lowest bidder at \$30,357, to do the work.

One year later, on June 22, 1931, the Board of Supervisors, by Resolution No. 34579, presented the newly-constructed Army Transport Service wharf to the United States with the understanding that the city had a permit to build its recreation pier, and that the army wharf reverted to municipal ownership if the government ever permanently ceased to use it.

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126. Monthly Catalogue of U.S. Public Documents July 1927-June 1928, pp. 565 and 803 (H. Rpt. 696, Feb. 16, 1928, and Act to authorize board of park commissioners of San Francisco to construct recreation pier at foot of Van Ness Avenue."); The Municipal Employee, 2, No. 5 (May 1928), 9; 2, No. 7 (July 1928), 24; 2, No. 10 (Oct. 1928), 21; 2, No. 11 (Nov. 1928), 5; S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1928, p. 1723; John S. Bolles and Ernest Born, A Plan for Fisherman's Wharf (Prepared for the San Francisco Port Authority, 1961), p. 22.

The following month the Park Commissioners selected Healy-Tibbitts Construction Company's low bid of \$97,570 to build the first unit of the recreation pier--bents eighty to 133, or approximately 636 feet--according to plans dated March 23, 1931. While hand laborers hired by the City began to grade and clear the beach area for the seawall and other later improvements, a crew of Healy-Tibbitts Company men set to work on the recreation pier early in August 1931, under the supervision of Inspector L. D. Smith and engineers Frank G. White and Harry E. Squire. The casting for concrete jackets, begun on August 4, was completed by December 18, 1931, as was the removal of the old army pier, and the construction of 126 feet of the recreation pier. After another year and a half of construction, the entire 1,850-foot-long recreation pier stood finished with the exception of concrete curbing, seats, and parapet wall, for which the Board of Supervisors let a contract with Meyer Brothers in October 1933, at an estimated cost of \$10,996.<sup>127</sup>

f. Federal and State Programs of Assistance,  
1933-39

Between 1931 and 1933, when the city first applied for federal relief money available because of the nationwide

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127. S.F. Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1929, p. 1922; 1931, pp. 2208, 2224, 3458-59; S.F. Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1930, pp. 10, 22, 25; 1931, pp. 51-52, 58, 60-66, 69, 77; according to the June 1932 "Minutes," p. 44, the Park Commissioners voted to ask Mayor Rossi for an appropriation of \$250,000 to complete the pier; 1933, pp. 21, 39, 42, 57; 1934, p. 21, records the completion of Meyers Brothers contract in March; in March 1932, Punnett, Parez and Hutchison, consulting engineers to the Park Commissioners, prepared a "Plan of Re-Alignment of Recreation Pier . . ." now on file at Engr. Div., S.F. Dept. of Rec. and Parks. This realignment may have been the result of recommendations made by engineers White and Squire in October 1931. "Minutes," 1931, p. 77; San Francisco, The Bay, p. 305.

depression, San Francisco authorized hand labor to clean, grade, and prepare the Aquatic Park site for major construction along the beach. By December 1931 some twenty-two men had excavated thousands of yards of dirt from the proposed stadium site; constructed a parking space off Beach Street; fenced the construction area; erected an office; and hauled more than fifty truckloads of cobblestones from all over the city to a huge pile at Larkin and Jefferson Streets to await construction of the seawall. The office building, as well as the signs describing the construction work and the cribbing for excavated dirt, had been made from salvaged lumber, while railroad handcars had been borrowed from the belt railroad to haul much of the excavated dirt to a point near Van Ness Avenue, south of the railroad trestle. By November 1931 the Board of Supervisors had approved an \$8,000 appropriation from the "Urgent Necessity" funds for the work and in January 1933 they allocated another \$10,000 from the Public Parks and Squares fund to pay for this hand labor.

The hundreds of thousands of dollars needed to proceed with the development of Aquatic Park, however, could not be drawn from such limited municipal accounts. On June 17, 1933, the passage of the National Industrial Recovery Act by Congress offered hope for the park's future. The Board of Supervisors, recognizing at once their opportunities, resolved to apply to the National Recovery Administration (NRA) for assistance in completion of Aquatic Park and the Yacht Harbor, "two of the most important recreational developments in the City and County." At the same time, they hoped to borrow \$480,000, thirty percent of which the NRA would cover, to complete the sewer project so that the



condemned waters at Bakers Beach and Aquatic Park no longer would present a serious health hazard.<sup>128</sup>

Having pledged to allocate \$1,600,000 from federal grants to see the Yacht Harbor and Aquatic Park completed, the Board of Supervisors called for a special election in November 1933 to incur a bonded debt as its part of the project money. Proposition 9 called for a bond of \$700,000 for Aquatic Park, on the condition that the NRA would pay thirty percent of the labor and materials required to complete construction, which included

boat houses for rowing clubs, the creation of a bathing beach, park and playground areas, a concrete wharf to facilitate auto parking, bathhouses, convenience stations, service buildings, gymnasiums, hand ball courts, shower and locker rooms, solariums, and club quarters, grading and rock filling, construction of concrete seawall and retaining walls, and paving street promenade and sidewalk areas, relocating belt line railway and creating water and electric light systems and landscape gardening at Aquatic Park, . . . .

Twelve other municipal bond issues ran on the ballot with Proposition 9, all of which the NRA endorsed, having assured the city it would provide the thirty percent, or \$10,000,000, as its part of the agreement. Six thousand unemployed men and women would immediately go to work if all the bond issues passed which no doubt gave reason for some bonds to

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128. Quote from, S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1931, pp. 3221, 3256, 3458-59; 1933, pp. 1212, 1304; Richard B. Morris, Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1953), p. 345; S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1933, p. 5.

pass. But the Aquatic Park proposition failed, and construction at the site limped along in 1934 and 1935, in part with the aid of State Emergency Relief Administration (SERA) labor and private contributions of equipment, until a proposal submitted to the newly-created Works Progress Administration (WPA) in December 1935, finally set construction into full swing.<sup>129</sup>

The State Works Progress Administration office approved the city's Aquatic Park project proposal on December 12, 1935, and on December 19, the Board of Supervisors resolved to appropriate \$6,000 from the Public Parks and Squares Fund so that the WPA Aquatic Park project might be provided with engineering plans, specifications, and supervision which federal funds did not cover. Due to his long association with the Aquatic Park plans, the Board appointed John M. Punnett as consulting engineer and on January 16, 1936, Punnett presented a revised plan to the Board of Park Commissioners who unanimously approved it.

Construction on the site began early in 1936 with some 782 WPA laborers from the certified rolls. According to the official project proposal approved in December 1935, the work over a twelve-month period was to cost \$1,194,887 and entail,

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129. Quote from S.F., Bd. of Suprs., Journal, 1933, p. 1739; Ibid., p. 1212; 1934, pp. 1090, 1391; S.F. Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1934, pp. 61, 80, and pp. 48-51, which pages relate that in July 1934 the recreation pier still had not been completed although it was opened and especially popular with bass fishermen. The opening at the base of the pier requested by the rowing clubs, now organized into the Allied Rowing Clubs, had been closed on account of the refuse which came through and collected on the beach and in the cove waters. Morris, Encyclopedia, p. 349; L. M. Canady, Director, Div. of Operations, to C. E. Goranson; Dept. of Investigation, San Francisco, Aug. 20, 1937, NA, RG 69, W.P.A. Northern California Operations, Project Files, Official Project #65-3-2014, Reel B-447, hereinafter cited NA, RG 69, WPA, N. Cal. Opers., Proj. Files, O.P. #65-3-2014, Reel B-447.

The construction of 3,250 cubic yards masonry rubble sea wall, 1 bath house, 2 boat houses, 2 life saving stations; paving 101,000 square feet of promenades; excavation and fill of 20,000 Cubic yards; relocation of 1,400 lineal feet of railroad track; the installation of flood light system for night swimming and rowing; and approach wharf to school boat house, pile cotter berths and landing floats.

The two boathouses, as explained in June 1936 by William Mooser Jr., Assistant Director for the WPA program in District 7, Northern California were to be constructed to accommodate four rowing clubs in one, and the public schools and Sea Scouts in the other. The excavation and fill was part of the street work needed to extend Van Ness Avenue out to the recreation pier, while the bathhouse, planned to accommodate some 5,000 people, was designed to be mostly below street grade in order to act as a retraining wall for Beach Street and the adjacent gardens.<sup>130</sup>

Mooser could speak from authority, as he and Elmore E. Hutchison, as former city employees, had prepared the elevations and floor plans for Aquatic Park. Moreover, Mooser's subsequent position as Chief Engineer and District Director for San Francisco's WPA program gave him first-hand knowledge of the

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130. Quotation from Report on Progress of The Works Program in San Francisco ( San Francisco: Works Progress Administration, 1938 , p. 18; Canady to Goranson, Aug. 20, 1937; William R. Lawson, Director, District 7, by Mooser, Jr., Asst. Dir., to L. M. Canady, Director, Div. of Operations, June 2, 1936, NA, RG 69, WPA, N. Cal. Opers., Proj. Files., O.P. #65-3-2014, Reel B-447; Summary Report on the Works Program in Northern California Cumulative Through December 1937 (San Francisco: Works Progress Administration, Northern California, 1938), p. 13.



construction at Aquatic Park and made it possible for him to appoint his father, William Mooser, Sr., as consulting architect through the firm of Punnett, Perez, and Hutchison, for the erection of the bathhouse he had designed. The two Moosers were second and third generation San Francisco architects; the first William Mooser began practice as an architect in San Francisco in 1860, and at his death in 1898, William Mooser, Jr., succeeded him. Mooser, Jr., went on to become the first City Architect in 1902 where he did excellent work to establish a Bureau of Buildings and a system for building codes in San Francisco. In his private practice he designed many noteworthy buildings, among them the Ghiradelli warehouse near Aquatic Park. After World War I, his son, by then William Mooser, Jr., joined the firm which continued to operate during the Depression years, despite the fact that Mooser, Jr., received the directorship of the San Francisco WPA program.<sup>131</sup>

Before construction of the buildings got underway at Aquatic Park, all hands went to work on the stone masonry seawall and the promenades. Made entirely of salvaged materials discarded from the abandoned Odd Fellows Cemetery and from the WPA street improvement projects in San Francisco, the

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131. San Francisco A Brief Biographical Sketch of Some of the Most Prominent Men Who Will Preside Over Her Destiny For At Least Two Years (San Francisco: Pacific Publishing Company, 1902), p. 117; San Francisco Examiner Aug. 11, 1969, clipping (obituary of Mooser Jr.), Notebook 32 D, S.F. Maritime Museum; a photo copy of the January 1937 plans for the bathhouse prepared for the Board of Park Commissioners by Mooser and Punnett, architect and engineer, exists in the photo files for Aquatic Park in the S.F. History Room, S.F.P.L. The original plans did not come to light during this research. Interview with William Mooser Sr., typescript, no date, in photo notebook for Aquatic Park, S.F. Maritime Museum. J. J. Mieldazis to E. E. Smith, Oct. 23, 1939, Aquatic Park Investigation, pp. 1, 3, NA, RG 69, WPA, Box 902, Calif., File 651.109, Aquatic Park, S.F.

3,250 cubic yards of rubble seawall progressed slowly during 1936 and 1937, much of the work having to be done in the early hours of the morning to take advantage of the ebb tides in order to lay the foundation below the water level. By March 1937 the 101,000 square feet of promenades had been paved except a small section where the boat houses still stood at the foot of Polk Street, and the retaining wall only awaited the necessary relocation of the railroad tracks before it could be completed. In the opinion of WPA field representative, E. L. Whelan, the work looked first class and well organized. At that date about 403 of 600 men requisitioned for Aquatic Park were actively assigned, but only 150 to 200 were working daily.<sup>132</sup>

In July 1936, while swimmers and sunbathers enjoyed the cove's still skimpy beach, WPA laborers laid the foundations for the bathhouse, and by October the framing for the structure stood nearly completed. William Mooser Sr., supervising architect, later recalled the frugal but skilled procedures followed during construction:

We made everything on the scene . . . that we could. We had a regular machine shop--had our own mill for doing mill work--made all our own electrical fixtures--had our own foundry. Had a blacksmith's shop--made our own wrought iron work.

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132. Lawson, by Mooser, to Canady, June 2, 1936; Whelan to Charles F. B. Roeth, San Francisco, Mar. 29, 1937, NA, RG 69, WPA, N. Cal. Opers., Proj. Files, O.P. 65-3-2014; Hansen, San Francisco Almanac, p. 184; several photographs of the seawall and promenades under construction have been collected in a notebook on Aquatic Park at S.F. Maritime Museum.

We made our requisitions for what we had to buy--glass, stainless steel, steel frame of building--and sent it to Treasury Department in Washington.

We contracted for almost nothing except steel frame of building and fabrication of the stainless steel.

His recollections, as transcribed from an interview, suggest a spirit of comraderie and self-sufficiency which must have contributed to the high quality of workmanship commented on by WPA field representative Whelan in March 1937.<sup>133</sup>

Another apparent reason for the distinguished workmanship on the Aquatic Park project in the late 1930s related to the ready supply of skilled and semi-skilled building mechanics in San Francisco, many of whom found employment in their trades through the WPA work rolls. Men like Mooser Jr., and Mooser Sr., and E. Elmore Hutchison, of Punnett, Perez and Hutchison, Civil Engineers--all with established reputations in San Francisco--contributed to the planning and construction of the long-awaited project, while, through the Federal Art Project of WPA, the well known San Francisco artist, Hilaire Hiler, was hired to design the interior of the bathing pavilion, and the prominent local sculptor, Beniamino Bufano, was available to complete some ten statues in red granite for the esplanade and interior of the building. By May 1938 the list of persons actually working on the project reflected the high percentage of skilled labor represented on

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133. Interview with Mooser, transcript, no date, and construction photos, Aquatic Park photo notebook, S.F. Maritime Museum; Whelan to Roeth, Mar. 29, 1937, NA, RG 69, WPA, N. Cal. Oper., Proj. Files, O.P. 65-3-2014, Reel B-447.

the job: nine general supervisory engineers and inspectors, thirty-six skilled labor foremen, thirty clerical and first aid, 284 skilled and intermediate workers, and 453 common laborers. Even with more than half the crew skilled or semi-skilled, however, the WPA inspector considered the project undermanned in most trades which may have helped explain the slow progress of construction through December 1937.<sup>134</sup>

As explained after the building's completion, the bathhouse represented "one of the most modern in design in the bay region." The design, which throughout the building was "based geometrically on the spiral and the summation series of intervals engendered by its protection," reflected a motif "rich in symbolic as well as biological significance." According to Hilaire Hiler, the marine theme found expression in the colors, patterns, and materials of the interior decoration. In the main lounge the terrazzo marble floors were embellished with crushed abalone shells, while thirty-seven mural panels designed by Hiler presented "a flowing arabesque based on the ocean wave." Symbolic representations of the lost continents of Atlantis and the lost Pacific Continent linked the murals with the building's architecture. The water symbol, "oft repeated in its biological, mythological, ethnological, historical, and psychoanalytical implications," suggested the extremely sophisticated message of Hiler's decorative designs.

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134. Lawson by Mooser to Canady, June 2, 1936; Whelan's inspection report for May 11, 12 and 16, 1938; Hutchison worked under Mooser Jr., supervising the San Francisco WPA projects. San Francisco Examiner, Mar. 30, 1938, clipping in NA, RG 69, WPA, N. Cal. Oper., Proj. Files, O.P. 65-3-2014, Reels B-447 and 448.

Other artists contributed to various aspects of the interior, among them John Glut, who designed the lighting fixtures for the main lounge; Sargent Johnson, who designed the intaglio carvings of greenish slate on the entrance pediments, as well as the large tile mosaics and two sculptures on the portico; Richard Ayer, who provided the design for the banquet room with its relief work in different materials and floor design based on a shoal chart of the bay region; and, Robert Clark, who designed the colorful, semi-abstract decoration for the radio room on the fourth floor. A team of skilled artisans helped Hiller complete 26,000 square feet of red floor tile, more than 20,000 square feet of terrazzo, over 1,250 pieces of art metal work, and 5,000 square feet of mural paintings for the building's interior and surroundings. The lavish decoration, costing over \$30,000, helped to bring the project costs of Aquatic Park up to \$1,839,644 by the close of construction in May 1939.<sup>135</sup>

Problems with the art project, which originally was estimated to cost only \$7,000, as well as with other features of the Aquatic Park construction, eventually led to formal complaints and official WPA investigations of the project in 1938 and 1939. At first, public attention was drawn to an investigation of the family and business relationships of Mooser Sr. and Jr., and of E. Elmore Hutchison who held a high WPA office in San Francisco and was a

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135. Quotations from untitled typescript, describing decoration in Aquatic Park building, with Hilaire Hiler's name provided under heading, in photo notebook on Aquatic Park, S.F. Maritime Museum; Report on Works Program, pp. 23-24; Mieldazis to Smith, Oct. 23, 1939, pp. 3 and 6, NA, RG 69, WPA, Box 902, Calif., File 651.109, Aquatic Park, S.F.; Healy, San Francisco Improved, p. 55; Achievements (Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, Northern California, Jobs 1935 WPA 1939), pp. 79-80.



member of the firm Punnett, Parez and Hutchison which received contracts from the City's WPA program for Aquatic Park and the Yacht Harbor. Later, in May 1938, Field Representative Whelan made an inspection of the Aquatic Park project, and while he found the quality of the work "excellent throughout," especially in relation to the craftsmanship shown in the interior design, he criticized San Francisco as the WPA sponsor, for contributing less than five percent of the skilled labor, noting, at the same time, that the project needed 236 more men, 186 of which represented skilled workmen.

A far more comprehensive investigation of the Aquatic Park construction followed in October 1939, after sculptor Beniamino Bufano and Adolph S. Oko, Jr., of San Francisco, called upon Howard Hunter, WPA Deputy Commissioner in Washington D.C., to voice their complaints about the City's management of Aquatic Park which had officially been dedicated in January 1939 by Mayor Rossi. The complaint focused on the Gordon Brothers, who had been granted a lease on the building by the Park Commissioners in September 1938, but the complaint sparked an investigation which revealed that extensive management problems during construction had led to the high costs and numerous delays on the project. J. J. Mieldazis, the WPA investigator, completed a thirty-three page comprehensive report based on interviews with twenty-three persons associated with the project, as well as on available records in San Francisco. The most glaring problems, he learned, had arisen from poor supervision over the work and from a lack of completed plans for the building, which together led to some 150 revisions in the original building specifications. According to Mieldazis' findings, "the frequent changes caused confusion among the workers and friction between the numerous individuals interested in the project." Few of the at least six different WPA project superintendents on the site knew the intended use of the building under construction, and

most agreed that the structure progressed ahead of the current plans, which at times arrived at the site without dates. The frequent revisions, moreover, occasionally required that completed construction be ripped out and redone. Mooser Sr. told Mieldazis that the plumbing and electrical features were changed so often that it would be difficult to determine the exact locations of the final installations. After Leo and Kenneth Gordon received their lease on the building as concessionaires in September 1938, they demanded that changes be made on the still uncompleted interior in order to accommodate their restaurant business. Casting aside the original scheme for the buildings' rooms, the Gordons converted the bathhouse to serve their purposes, partially at WPA expense. Between January 1939, when the WPA turned the project over to the City and the Gordons took over the building, and September 1939, public criticism of the Gordons' exclusive casino restaurant in a building originally constructed for a park bathhouse, mounted to the point where sculptor Bufano refused to release his art works for display at Aquatic Park, thereby helping to trigger the October 1939 report and a subsequent investigation in November.<sup>136</sup>

The WPA investigations of the Aquatic Park project also found fault in the sponsor, San Francisco, for not furnishing the labor, funds, and interest in the project which the original agreement specified, making the park's construction "almost entirely a WPA undertaking." The City, moreover, had complete

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136. Whalen, report on inspection made May 11, 12, and 16, 1938; San Francisco Examiner, Mar. 30, 1938, clipping, NA, RG 69, WPA, N. Cal. Opers., Proj. Files, O.P. 65-3-2014, Reel B-448; Lease by Board of Park Commissioners to Leo Gordon and Kenneth Gordon, Sept. 21, 1938; Mieldazis to Smith, Oct. 23, 1939, pp. 1, 3, 5-9; Investigation dated Nov. 14, 1939, p. 4, by Division of Investigation, WPA, Federal Works Agency, NA, RG 69, WPA, Box 902, Calif., File 651.109, Aquatic Park, S.F.

responsibility for the development of the bathing beach which required the removal of about 5,600 cubic yards of debris and the pumping in of about 35,000 cubic yards of sand, at an estimated cost of \$16,420. By October 1939 the project still had not been completed, although the City had made two unsuccessful attempts to secure a sandy beach along the south end of the cove. San Francisco had, however, also drawn up a proposal to construct a submerged rock retaining wall about 200 feet from the seawall in order to protect the beach area from the erosive action of high tides, and to fill in the space behind the wall with clean white sand from Monterey to complete the beach. At the same time, the City had assumed responsibility for the two Aquatic Park units left uncompleted by WPA laborers--the three comfort stations (77% completed) and the floodlight system (96% completed)--and negotiations were underway for the City to sponsor the completion of the tile mosaic murals and sculptural work for the park.

Because of the complications and delays during the three years of construction at Aquatic Park, five of the thirteen original units proposed for the project were abandoned--the two boathouses--one for the rowing clubs and the other for the public schools and Sea Scouts--and the cutter berths, approach wharf, and landing floats.

Despite all the unfinished work, however, Aquatic Park was hailed as "A Palace for the Public" by the Works Projects Administration in 1939. Into its construction went more than 1,747,800 man hours of labor and direction, more than 100,000 sacks of cement, over 1,000 tons of reinforcing steel, over 2,000 trees and shrubs, as well as numerous lawns, flowers, and special beds, not to mention the lavish materials and skilled labor to decorate the interior of the main building. "The finished park," the WPA writer concluded, "fills completely the need for a central



water playland." His romantic picture of a protected playground "in the water and on the shore" for happy youngsters and thousands of wearied adults, however, shortly thereafter was dispelled by continued problems and interferences which restricted the general public's use of the nearly \$2,000,000 Aquatic Park for many years to come.<sup>137</sup>

g. Early Operational Problems, 1939-41

When the WPA officials decided to terminate the Aquatic Park project and transfer the uncompleted recreation area to its sponsor in January 1939, San Francisco assumed a difficult task to satisfy the public at large and the special interests groups who had been pushing for the completion of the park since 1909. The Dolphin, Ariel, and South End Rowing Clubs, especially, expected improvements for their boating facilities in the cove, having had their clubhouses and launching wharves relocated late in 1937 to the eastern end of the beach where the action of the waves made it dangerous to launch their boats. According to the approved plans of December 1935, the rowing clubs were to receive a modern boathouse on the sheltered west side of the cove, and although plans and specifications for its construction were completed and materials delivered by 1938, the WPA had ordered the project's abandonment in order to complete the main building. As one of their first acts of responsibility as managers of the thirty-one acre Angelo Rossi Aquatic Park in January 1939, the Board of Park Commissioners carried through an agreement to purchase the three clubhouses at a total cost of \$5,947.71, with the understanding that the clubs' members could lease the facilities at a reasonable rate

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137. Quotations from Achievements, pp. 79-80; Mieldazis to Smith, Oct. 23, 1939, pp. 1-3; NA, RG 69, WPA, Box 902, Calif., File 651.109, Aquatic Park, S.F.

until a new building or buildings were erected by the City for them, and so long as they maintained the structures up to city standards. From that date until the present the club members have continued to anticipate the eventual relocation of their buildings or the construction of a new clubhouse on the cove's western shore, as originally planned and promised them by the city, state, and federal planners.<sup>138</sup>

The Board of Park Commissioners had more success satisfying the City's School Board and Sea Scout organizations when they made arrangements in the fall of 1939 for them to move from the Yacht Harbor to Aquatic Park as soon as the city completed their boathouse as originally described in the 1935 WPA project proposal. An equally direct solution to a potential problem raised by the San Francisco Housing Authority's proposal to construct low-cost housing on the vacant lots just east of the bathhouse had been reached in February 1939, when the Board of Supervisors approved an appropriation of \$10,250 to purchase the first of several parcels of land from the California Packing Corporation, thus increasing the future responsibility of the Park Commissioners for improving Aquatic Park.

Another pressing problem immediately faced by the Board of Park Commissioners at Aquatic Park in 1939 concerned the high level of contaminants in the cove from the Jefferson and Hyde Street sewer, the nearby park comfort station, and from sewer pipes off Pier 37 to the east. Having studied the conclusions

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138. S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1937, pp. 27-28, 78; 1938, pp. 65, 89, 113-117, 120, 165; 1939, pp. 3, 17-21; 1940, p. 32; photo dated Dec. 7, 1937, showing clubhouses being moved, Aquatic Park photo notebook, S.F. Maritime Museum.

of a report from the City's Public Health Service, the Commissioners in February 1939 quarantined the cove for swimming until funds were appropriated to correct the sewer systems. Typically, city appropriations did not come easily and the public was forbidden to swim at Aquatic Park for many years to follow.<sup>139</sup>

The most controversial and complicated problem faced by the Park Commissioners during the first years of operation, however, centered around concessionaires Leo and Kenneth Gordon who not only had won their lease without any competition, but who operated a commercial enterprise which excluded the public from parts of the main building with signs reading, "Private Keep Out." What's more, the Gordons refused to pay their agreed rent of \$1,000 per month for the building because of its state of incompleteness. After extensive investigations by WPA representatives, and outspoken criticism of the City's mismanagement of Aquatic Park by the press, the Board of Supervisors finally cancelled the lease on August 9, 1940, when the Gordons owed \$15,000 to the City. Two months earlier the Park Commissioners had closed the building to the public after giving notice to the Gordons to vacate or pay the rent. The final settlement between the city and the Gordons did not come, however, until April 1941, at which time the San Francisco Examiner informed its readers that the City finally could start planning a public use for the Aquatic Park Casino (as the Gordons had named

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139. S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1939, pp. 33-34; 1940, pp. 2, 260, 291; 1941, pp. 28, 40; Polks Progress, July 25, 1940, San Francisco Examiner, Dec. 11, 1935, clippings, Aquatic Park Text, S.F. Maritime Museum; Investigation of Nov. 14, 1939, p. 20, NA, RG 69, WPA, Box 902, Calif., File 651.109, Aquatic Park, S.F.

it), now that the two-year controversy over the two million dollar white elephant had been resolved.<sup>140</sup>

Although plans already had been announced to convert the Aquatic Park building into headquarters for visiting soldiers and sailors to provide them a canteen, showers, dance hall, and reading and writing rooms during their stay in San Francisco, the Park Commissioners, weary of setting off another public scandal by permitting part of the park building for the exclusive use of any one organization, voted on April 10, 1941, to reject the Citizens' Hospitality and Welfare Committee's request for the building's top two floors. The same day the Board heard the request of Walter J. Walsh representing the San Francisco Museum of Science and Industry for space in the Aquatic Park building to display marine exhibits for the public's enjoyment. Although favorable to the proposal, the Board explained that no funds were available to pay the necessary maintenance and supervision for such exhibits, nor could they assume responsibility for them. Obviously bound by financial shortages and by public censure, the Park Commissioners were proceeding cautiously to plan for the building's use. While they did make some special concessions for the servicemen that month, undoubtedly under public pressure, and in July carried out long-overdue improvements to the rock and gravel strewn beach by hauling eighty million cubic feet of sand from the Union Square excavations to Aquatic Park, the Board of Park Com-

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140. Mieldazis to Smith, Oct. 23, 1939; Investigation of Nov. 14, 1939; B. M. Harloe, Asst. Commr., to H. E. Smith, Reg. Dir., WPA, Dec. 12, 1939; H. E. Smith to Harloe, July 11, 1940; unsigned memo, Dec. 3, 1940; San Francisco News, July 12, 15, Nov. 6, 1940, clippings, NA, RG 69, WPA, Box 902, Calif., File 651.109, Aquatic Park, S.F.; S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1940, pp. 139, 212; San Francisco Examiner Apr. 5, 1941, clipping, Aquatic Park photo album, S.F. Maritime Museum.

missioners found themselves relieved of the thorny problem of managing the controversial park building in the fall of 1941 when the troops of Battery B, 216th Coast Artillery from Camp Maan, took it over as a barracks during their tour of duty in the Bay Area. After the United States entered World War II, in January 1942 the U.S. Army proposed to lease the park facilities for military purposes and on February 13, 1942, the Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to approve the lease for the Municipal Pier and Aquatic Park Center. The lavishly decorated Aquatic Park building had a role to play in guarding the city and country from foreign attack.<sup>141</sup>

h. World War II Occupation, 1941-1948

While the United States held a lease on Aquatic Park for six years, until February 1948, the military made the most significant use of the main building from around June 1942 to January 1946 when it served as headquarters first for the 216th Coast Artillery Regiment, and then for the entire Fourth Anti-Aircraft Command which covered the defense of the Pacific Coast. According to Col. Robert B. Gifford, who served as Chief of Staff of the Fourth Anti-Aircraft Command, the first floor of the Aquatic Park building was set aside for the officers' mess on the west end, for the General's driver and other functions in the main lobby, and for the enlisted mess on the east end. On the second floor, the administrative command had the space partitioned into

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141. Clippings, San Francisco Call-Bulletin, May 1, 1941, and untitled, June 6 and July 9, 1941, Aquatic Park photo notebook, S.F. Maritime Mus.; photo and caption, Nov. 1941, in folder "S.F. Parks, Aquatic Park, Maritime Museum," S.F. History Room, S.F.P.L.; S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1941, pp. 122-24, 139-40; 1942, pp. 27, 32.



offices, and on the top floor, General John L. Homer had his office as commander of the headquarters.

In July 1942 the Board of Supervisors approved a proposal to house the Army Chaplain of the 216th Coast Artillery in the eastern convenience station of Aquatic Park. In December 1943 the War Department received a permit to survey for and construct a landing wharf and four six-foot floats at the west end of the lagoon. From year to year the lease between the city and federal government was extended, while the need for the facilities declined after the battle of Midway in June 1942 and after the close of the war in September 1945. By March 1946 the army was making plans to restore the Aquatic Park facilities in preparation of transferring them back to the city. Before the transfer could be arranged, however, an army tug crashed into the Municipal Pier, making it unsafe for public use. A study of the damage and the necessary repair work took several months in late 1947, so it was not until early 1948 when San Francisco once again assumed complete responsibility for Aquatic Park.<sup>142</sup>

During the military occupation and control of the Aquatic Park building and pier, the Board of Park Commissioners continued to address certain problems and issues which remained under their jurisdiction. As early as March 1942 requests began to be received for the use of Aquatic Park by

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142. Notes taken at visit of Col. Robt. Gifford to Maritime Museum in 1953, Aquatic Park, Illustrations, S.F. Maritime Mus.; S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1942, pp. 205, 272, 307; 1943, pp. 7, 313, 366; 1944, pp. 1, 33, 137; 1945, p. 88; 1946, p. 54; 1947-48, pp. 130, 141, 148-49, 182; 1948, p. 28; Punnett, Parez and Hutchison, the engineering firm investigated in 1938-39 for its role in WPA work at Aquatic Park, received the contract to study the pier. "Minutes," 1947-48, p. 141.

commercial parties as well as special interest groups, among them the Sea Scouts who still had not secured their promised boating facilities in the cove. Until hostilities had come to a close, however, the Park Commissioners refused to commit themselves to any specific plan for the park's use. The San Francisco Museum of Science and Industry, represented by San Francisco's socialites, Mrs. Adolph Spreckels and Mrs. Henry Dippell, as well as by Commander Howard M. McKinley, U.S.N.R., also put in frequent bids for display space in the main building, but the Commissioners would only grant them storage space for their marine models and artifacts until the war had ended. The only exception the Commissioners made for park facilities was a month to month lease of the round house granted to concessionaires in June 1944 for a snack bar.

More critical matters, however, captured the Board's attention. Erosion of the beach, which they had improved with sand from Union Square in 1941, had become so serious on the southwest corner of the park by January 1944 that the foundation of the seawall stood in danger of collapsing under the weight of the freight trains which passed over it enroute to and from the Fort Mason transport docks. Moreover, the sand lost on the western beach had piled up under the rowing clubs' wharves, making it impossible for the members to launch their boats. The fault clearly lay with the Park Commission which had not completed the original plans to construct groins on the west end of the cove to minimize beach erosion, so that the Board resolved to satisfy the clubs' complaint by appropriating immediate relief money. Instead of the clubs' proposal to construct an extension for the three landing wharves, however, the Board decided to spend the money on the construction of three groins, as originally designed by the Board of Public Works, and on the restoration of the beach by the relocation

of the sand under the boat club wharves to the southwest corner of the cove.<sup>143</sup>

During 1945 the Park Commissioners reconsidered the problem of sewage pollution at Aquatic Park, and in March 1946 approved a transfer of fifty square feet on the southwest corner of Hyde and Jefferson Streets to the San Francisco Department of Public Works for the construction of a sewage pumping plant. Part of the incentive for this transfer may have come from the San Francisco Committee for the Development of Aquatic Park which, represented by Harry Sullivan and Elmer Delaney (former President of the Allied Rowing Clubs), addressed the Board of Park Commissioners in June 1947 to declare their interest in and expectations for Aquatic Park. According to their statement, the committee, composed of more than thirty organizations throughout the city, had succeeded in obtaining an appropriation of \$70,000 for the sewage disposal plant's construction in order to eliminate the unsanitary conditions in the cove. Concerned that the park building be made available to the public at large, the committee representatives also requested the opportunity to participate in the future planning of the park so that funds would be available for maintenance, daily operation, and future development at the site. Obviously the committee had been informed that the Park Commissioners faced the 1947-1948 fiscal year without any operating budget for Aquatic Park because the

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143. S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1942, p. 84; 1943, pp. 341, 354; 1944, pp. 2-3, 26, 131, 167, 257-58, 269; 1945, pp. 30, 187, 198, 214; 1946, pp. 4, 35, 43, 66, 75, 84, 104, 122, 169, 179, 182, 190, 201, 209, 217, 227, 227, 233; 1947, pp. 3, 58. Evidently unsatisfied with the Park Commissioners' solution, the South End Rowing Club in Sept. 1948 received permission to extend their pier at their own expense. *Ibid.*, 1948, p. 149.

appropriation they had requested had been deleted from the city's annual program, despite the fact that the United States was on the verge of terminating their lease on the main building and Municipal Pier.<sup>144</sup>

i. Post-War Slump, 1948-50

Without any funds to operate Aquatic Park once the Army gave up its lease in February 1948, the Park Commissioners necessarily closed the bathhouse building to the public until the end of the fiscal year. Few, except the stubborn Dolphin, Ariel, and South End club members, dared disregard the no swimming regulations at Aquatic Park, however, so that the facilities for bathers really were not needed. Thus the once-glorified Aquatic Park continued to offer few benefits to the public at large in 1948, but expectations for improvements at the site during the 1948-49 fiscal year ran high after \$15,000 was appropriated for repairs to the main building--which the military had turned over to the city in first rate condition--and \$100,000 for new pilings needed to make the recreation pier structurally sound.

The 1948-49 budget, however, failed to include funds for Aquatic Park's maintenance and operation, except to provide for watchmen and a skeletal janitorial force, so that the Park Commissioners could do little more for the park's development than consider proposals for its use from the San Francisco Sportsmen's Aquatic Park Committee and the Committee for the Development of Aquatic Park. On their shoestring finances, the Park Commissioners did arrive at a temporary operating procedure for the park in their September 22, 1948, meeting. The four-point

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144. S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1940, p. 32; 1945, p. 198; 1946, p. 55; 1947-48, pp. 117-18.

policy opened the building to the public on a five-day week schedule; made the lower floor available for sunbathers who could use the dressing room facilities; set aside the Blue Room for an adult recreation program under the American Women's Voluntary Service; and made the other rooms available for social gatherings, meetings, and the like, on a scheduled basis. Real impetus for the improvement and public use of the Aquatic Park facilities did not come until 1950, however, when the San Francisco Maritime Museum Association received permission to set up a museum in the building to preserve San Francisco's rich maritime history.<sup>145</sup>

j. Recreational Plans and Improvements, 1950-77

No sooner had the San Francisco Maritime Museum Association won their bid for the Aquatic Park lease with extensive backing from the press, than the development of Aquatic Park became a serious issue for the City, commercial interests in the surrounding area, and private interest groups. In December 1950 the City proposed constructing a swimming pool and aquatic sports stadium for Aquatic Park as part of the post-war capital improvement projects. By March 1952 the plans for the indoor swimming pool had been presented to the National Production Authority (NPA) in Washington, D.C., and already the public had voted for a bond issue to cover the construction of the pool with the aid of federal funds, should the NPA officials approve the project. The city's School Board stood staunchly behind the proposal, as did individuals and groups who still were banned from swimming in the cove's sheltered waters on account of pollution

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145. San Francisco Chronicle, June 28, 1948, clipping, Aquatic Park Illustrations, S.F. Maritime Museum; S.F., Bd. of Park Commrs., "Minutes," 1948, pp. 126, 148; 1950, pp. 53, 70, 80; Karl Kortum, Director, S.F. Maritime Museum, to Jack R. Dent, Nov. 2, 1959, S.F. Maritime Museum (Notebook) II, S.F. Maritime Museum.



(despite the fact that reports from the \$7,000,000 sewage treatment plant at Hyde and Jefferson Streets indicated that the contaminates had been reduced to a safe level.) With the failure to receive final approval for the elaborate enclosed swimming pool, however, the Park Commissioners evidently redirected their attention to the conditions at the cove, and in July 1953, they lifted the fifteen-year ban on swimming at Aquatic Park. Shortly thereafter lifeguards stood on duty, the lockers and showers were made available to the public at no charge, and the beach was attracting swimmers and sunbathers, as originally planned for the park. The improved conditions for aquatic recreation lasted only eight years, however, before the Park Commissioners again had to ban swimming at the cove on account of pollution, a ban which continued to limit the public's enjoyment of the beach until June 1970, when health officers gave permission to open the cove once again to swimmers, making it the only beach in San Francisco where the water was safe for swimming.<sup>146</sup>

Besides the swimming conditions, the Park Commissioners turned their attention to the recreation pier at Aquatic Park during the decade of the fifties, after the 7838-ton freighter, Harry Luckenback, crashed into the breakwater in February 1953. A bond issue approved by the public in 1955 included \$82,000 to rehabilitate the popular fishing wharf and to provide a convenience station on it for the public. In July 1957 work on the pier, consisting of repairs, new supports, and a stone

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146. The San Francisco Maritime Museum will be discussed in the next section, Conservation and Preservation. San Francisco News, Mar. 13, 1952; Little City News, June 19, 1952; San Francisco Chronicle, July 4, 1953, June 20, 1970, clippings, and unidentified clippings, Dec. 18, 1950 and July 23, 1960; KCBS radio script, Oct. 10, 1953, Aquatic Park Text, S.F. Maritime Museum.

groin to protect it from the beating of the waves, was completed at a total cost of \$71,634.79.

But as conditions in one area of Aquatic Park improved, they seemed to deteriorate in others. After the Park Commissioners reinstituted a ban on swimming in July 1960, private interest groups launched their last effort to transform the area into a dream Aquatic Park. Originating with Philip S. Davies, a leading businessman and civic leader in San Francisco, and introduced by Commander Howard McKinley, U.S.N. Ret., who had worked to provide Aquatic Park with a maritime museum during the 1940s, the plan proposed a \$2,000,000 investment in the development of four indoor swimming pools with the heated and purified salt water; grandstands; beaches; and docks in the cove for 100 small boats. The group even hired the original architect and engineer for Aquatic Park, William Mooser and E. Elmore Hutchison, as well as J. E. Hayes, to draw up a tentative design for the new park, but no more came of the elaborate scheme, undoubtedly because the State of California had taken interest in establishing a maritime museum at Hyde Street and a Victorian Park on lands acquired at Beach and Hyde Streets. Thus, the preservation of San Francisco's rich maritime history, rather than the development of aquatic recreation, had taken precedence in the movement to improve the Aquatic Park area, and that story follows in the section on conservation and preservation below.<sup>147</sup>

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147. Clippings, no name, July 23, 1960; San Francisco Progress Sept. 8, 1960; San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 4, 1953, July 25, 1955; San Francisco News, July 7, 1955, Aquatic Park Text, S.F. Maritime Museum; S.F. Rec. and Park Dept., Annual Report 1955-56, p. 3; 1957-58, p. 35.

significance in the history of recreation in San Francisco. The district includes the 1909 Cliff House (SH-1), the ruins of Sutro Baths (SH-3), the main tunnel for filling the baths with seawater (SH-6), the wellhouse (SH-7), parapet (SH-9), and grounds (SH-25) at Sutro Heights, the right-of-way for the Ferries and Cliff House Railroad (SH-23), and the esplanade or seawall (OB-1) at Ocean Beach.

Recommend a historic structure report for the Cliff House and the partial restoration of the building to return the exterior to its 1909 facade. Recommend retaining the addition on the south side constructed in the 1950s and the treatment of it as part of the continuing history of the Cliff House. Recommend a historic structure and grounds report for Sutro Heights and the restoration of the gardens, walkways, and well house. Recommend preservation of the Sutro Bath ruins and the Sutro Heights parapet. Recommend site identification of the former structures at Sutro Heights and Baths. Recommend the interpretation of Sutro's contributions to the improvement of public recreation in San Francisco at Sutro Heights. Recommend a brochure to direct a walking tour of the district, with explanations of the ruins and remains of what once was one of the most popular recreation areas in San Francisco.

#### 6. Aquatic Park

Black Point Cove--the site of Aquatic Park--has provided recreation in its waters for close to a century. In the 1880s people came to the cove to swim and picnic, and in 1895 the Dolphin Rowing and Swimming Club built a new boathouse at the foot of Van Ness Avenue where the city's waterfront development would not interfere with its aquatic recreation. In 1909 continued bay fill along the waterfront forced the relocation of the Ariel and South End Rowing Clubs to Black Point Cove which, too, was being

threatened with future commercial development. That year an Aquatic Improvement Association, led by rowing club members, organized to fight for the preservation of Black Point Cove for aquatic recreation. The park movement took years to gain momentum but by 1917 the city had approved the exchange of lands with the Southern Pacific Railroad which set aside land at the foot of Van Ness Avenue for an aquatic park.

Acquiring the rest of the cove for the aquatic park took another seven years to arrange, requiring condemnation suits, negotiations with the U.S. Army, and Congressional approval. Finally, in 1931, construction began on the Municipal Pier which was designed to protect the cove waters. Construction of the bathhouse, complex and seawall, however, were completed with Works Progress Administration money and labor between 1936 and 1939. When dedicated in January 1939, Aquatic Park had been thirty years in the making, and had cost some \$2,000,000 to construct. It represented one of the most important recreational developments in the city and county of San Francisco. Architecturally, it possessed a bold maritime design conceived by San Francisco's noted architect, William Moose, Jr., and embellished by some of San Francisco's noted artists.

Although in the years since its completion Aquatic Park has not fulfilled its anticipated role as one of the greatest recreation areas in the city, its park facilities still have the potential to provide San Franciscans with a place in their urban environment to swim, fish, and row outdoors, in protected waters. Aquatic Park, with its boathouse (AP-1), east and west restroom buildings (AP-2, 11), east and west speakers (AP-19 and 20), amphitheater (AP-16), seawall (AP-18), and municipal pier (AP-4), appears to meet the criteria for and is recommended for nomination to the National Register for its local significance in San Francisco's recreational history.

Of the three rowing clubs which have been on the San Francisco waterfront for over a century and on Black Point Cove since 1909, two still are functioning, the Dolphin and Southend. These clubs led the movement to establish an aquatic park for San Francisco, and were included in the ongoing plans for the park since its authorization. Today the Dolphin and South End Clubs are the only nineteenth century rowing and swimming clubs still active in San Francisco County. Although now under city control, the rowing clubs at Aquatic Park will be transferred to GGNRA after legal complications are corrected. Recommend their inclusion in the National Register nomination for Aquatic Park when they are under National Park Service management.

Recommend a historic structure report for Aquatic Park and the preservation of its structures. Aquatic Park's bathhouse was adapted for the use of the San Francisco Maritime Museum in 1950. Recommend similar appropriate adaptive uses for buildings and structures when needed, to keep them in use.

#### 7. Marina and Yacht Harbor

After being the site for the popular Harbor View amusement park in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and then the site of the Panama Pacific International Exposition in 1915, the shoreline between the Presidio and Fort Mason became a city park known as the Marina and Yacht Harbor in 1924. Both the marina and yacht harbor originally were constructed for the 1915 exposition. The marina served as the landing field for stunt flyers during the exposition and for private aviators and San Francisco's first airmail service between 1920 and 1925. As a public park the marina and yacht harbor made more of the city's waterfront available for recreation, and protected the exceptional panoramic view of the bay and Marin Headlands for the benefit of all citizens and visitors to San Francisco.





9. Black Point Cove, site of Aquatic Park, April 11, 1925.

The three rowing and swimming clubs--Ariel, Southend, and Dolphin--stand in their original location at the foot of Van Ness Avenue. The California State Beltline Railroad trestle crosses the water's edge just in front of the clubhouses and over the launching piers. Original quartermaster's pier projects from end of cove.

Courtesy, National Archives, Record Group 18, Army Air Forces, Central Decimal Files 1917-1938, Project Files, Air Fields, Crissy Field.